

Michigan House Representative Chris Afendoulis

February 3, 2016

Kerry Baldwin  
254 College Ave SE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

Dear Mr. Afendoulis,

My husband and I have lived in our 135 year old Heritage Hill home in Grand Rapids for 29 years. Our neighborhood is one of the oldest and largest historic districts in the country. When we bought our home vines covered the entire face, including the windows, the plaster walls inside were cracked and crumbling, many layers of paint covered all of the oak woodwork, linoleum was glued to the hardwood floors and nearby crack houses were abundant. We have steadfastly spent considerable time and resources bringing our home back to its original beauty, using materials and methods appropriate to the historic character of the home, as have all of our neighbors. What was once a high crime, blighted slum area is now a lovely, safe, stable, cohesive, desirable community. Without the protections assured by our neighborhood's designation as a historic district none of this would have happened.

The work that we in our historic district have done to resurrect our home and neighborhood has benefitted the entire city of Grand Rapids. Downtown real estate values are soaring and apartment occupancy is at 100% with new housing (affordable and market rate) being built as fast as humanly possible. It is the assurance that a historic district will *remain* a historic district that causes people like me to invest in these structures and neighborhoods. HB 5232/SB720 removes that assurance completely. Furthermore, why you would want to make it more difficult for communities throughout the state to establish historic districts, in light of the benefits that they bring is baffling. It certainly looks as though developers would be the only group benefitting.

HB 5232/SB720 appears to be a carelessly crafted piece of legislation created without the input of anyone with actual understanding of historic preservation and how the current law works. If passed, the consequences of this bill, intended and unintended would be devastating for the residents of our state. It seems blatantly in support of the special interests of a handful of influential developers to the detriment of the rest of the population. Please stop and consider whether you want your political legacy to be the destruction of our thriving downtown districts and our state's architectural heritage. You are capable of much better.

Please slow down and reach out to others in a position to carefully review and revise this legislation into something that would really be a benefit to the state for the long haul.

Thank you,



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